

In which university spaces are students more likely to interact across racial/ethnic lines?

Sharrell Hibbler

EVOKE

About the Ethnographer

I am currently a senior here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, majoring in Sociology. My most recent research interests are concerned with which university spaces are students more likely to interact across racial/ethnic lines. As a McNair scholar, I have researched various parallels and contrasts between the situation in post-colonial Rwanda and post-emancipation in the U.S.

EXPLORE

Question

What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?

In which university spaces are students more likely to interact across racial/ethnic lines?
Does the quality of interaction vary within these university spaces?
What conditions or characteristics of spaces encourage interaction?
Which racial/ethnic groups are more likely to interact with each other?

Plan

How will you go about answering your inquiry?

My research plan involves conducting several formal interviews with students from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds as well as observing several locations where I suspect that students will be interacting across racial/ethnic lines. Ideally, I would have liked to interview a male and female of African American, Latino, Asian American, and Caucasian descent. However, due to scheduling conflicts I was only able to interview a male and female of African American and Caucasian descent. I was also fortunate enough to formally interview a female of Arab descent. After interviewing three students I learned that some organizations as well as locations attract a more racially diverse crowd of students as oppose to others. I plan to observe these suggested locations and/or organizations.

Suggested locations: Weston Hall Cafeteria, Cafe Paradiso, Courtyard Cafe (especially on Fridays), Moonstruck, Noodles Co., various Union events, and One World Cafe

Suggested Organization: U-C Hip-Hop Congress Organization

OBSERVE

What observations, or findings are you encountering in your research?

Thus far I have interviewed two informants for my research study. Both interviews rendered important information that will help me to answer my research questions. I have assigned these informants pseudonyms to protect their rights to privacy. So far I have interviewed an African-American male (Lucas) and a Caucasian female (Peyton).

In my interview with Lucas I was shocked that as a minority here at the university he displayed an exaggerated sense of racial diversity. Lucas compared his hometown

highschool to the university in terms of diversity. However, statistics as well as extractions from the interview show discrepancies in the racial make-up of both institutions. Lucas discussed how the university was considered to be a much larger replica of his hometown highschool. When asked about whether he felt that his group of closest friends were diverse he strategically interpreted diversity in terms of residential area(suburban vs. urban)instead of racial diversity. Lucas admitted that he would be less likely to interact across racial/ethnic lines in settings excluding work and volunteer sites. Lucas referred to interacting with racially diverse people as a tool for academic and career advancement. He did not express other benefits related to racial diversity.

The interview with Peyton was equally informative. She exhibited a very racially diverse mix of friends. Only one of the five names of Peyton's closest friends belong to the same racial/ethnic category as she. She elaborately discussed the racial composition of her hometown highschool, admitting that it was predominantly white; however, Peyton mentioned that she hardly ever interacted with these students outside of school. She talks extensively about hanging out and drinking with students from the public school her boyfriend attended. When asked to give ballpark figures pertaining to the racial composition of the university she was very close to the actual statistics. Peyton explained that she actually investigated the amount of racial diversity of the university before she enrolled.

My third interview was with a white male student named Nathan. My interview with Nathan rendered a lot of information about his political views and what he deemed was the "hypocrisy" of the university. Nathan's answers to my interview questions revealed that he is quite the "bleeding heart liberal" He is very radical in his thinking. One of the astounding things that he mentions in his interview is how the university's rhetoric concerning diversity and its actual practices are not aligned. As an example he uses the Project 500 mural that adorns the wall near the entrance of the Student Union. The mural is suppose to be a depiction of racial diversity. This is ironic especially because students and faculty alike have observed the "racial segregation" that is associated with this university space. Nathan talked extensively about how conservative the university is in terms of its beliefs and practices and the things in which it supports. My interview with Nathan was very insightful, he helped me see the larger picture pertaining to the university. I found it quite peculiar that a Caucasian male at a predominantly white university had developed a unique understanding of white privilege. Nathan was very pessimistic in terms of reporting ballpark figures pertaining to the amount of racial/ethnic diversity. he acknowledged that there is hardly any here at the University of Illinois.

I conducted my fourth interview with an African-American female named Brooke. Talking with Brooke was very interesting. My interview with Brooke showed me that the experience of an African-American from a upper middle class family was much different from the experience of a black person from the lower class. Brooke is very privileged she attended a predominantly white all girls Catholic school in a very affluent area of Chicago. Brooke mentions that there was absolutely no diversity at her highschool. She announces that there were only roughly eleven black girls in her graduating class (this information seems disheartening to her). Brooke also talks about the lack of racial diversity here at the University of Illinois. When asked to name her friends, Brooke named girls which were all of the same race/ethnicity as herself. She talked about interacting across racial/ethnic lines during events which involved her major (Cinema Studies). In her interview she talks of the small number of minorities yet alone African-Americans, "So when I see one of us, I try to get a converstaion going". Brooke seems to be very proud of being one of the very few minorities in the Cinema Studies program. She also informed me and invited me to participate in a documentary she was producing entitled, "The Black Student Experience".

Both interviews were very insightful. While interviewing Lucas I notice that he perceived his experience with interacting across racial/ethnic lines as a tool that could be used to promote academic and career advancement. He admitted that an individual's inability to interact across racial/ethnic lines could dramatically hinder personal success. While interviewing Peyton I noticed that she often hesitated to answer my questions. I assured her that her answers should be factual; however they are not a personal reflection of her individual character.

Lastly, I interviewed a student of Arab descent who shall call Anna. Anna is from the North side of Chicago and she attended Von Steubon highschool. Anna discussed how her hometown highschool was very diverse, in fact it had a racial/ethnic quota in terms of the student body. When asked to give ballpark figures she answered "25% of everything". Anna talked about this idea of forced diversity, she actually seemed indifferent to the quota system which many people would consider to be forced diversity (not to say that is a horrible thing). Her idea of the university and its racial composition was actually pretty lenient. She didn't actually condemn or support the university's amount of diversity. Through her answers I detected a that she encompassed a very exaggerated sense of diversity. One particular instance in which she voiced extreme discontent with the white student body was during a fundraising event for a Arabic country that had been destroyed by an earthquake. She adamantly discussed how many students were unresponsive to their cause. She even heard a student say, "We have our own problems in America, what about the Gulf Coast". Anna mentions that she felt that if she was a white student advocating for the earthquake relief that there would have been more donations and support from the student body.

OBSERVATION NOTES

My first observation took place in the Weston Hall dining center located in the six pack. Upon entering the cafeteria I strategically positioned myself so that I could easily observe the other groups of diners. In my observation I localized my "spacial gaze" to racially heterogenous groups of people in particular. I watched six racially heterogenous groups of people. I carefully observed the way in which they were seated and where they were seated within the cafeteria, and the nature of their interaction. I listened intently for remnants of conversations and interpretive body language. I also timed how long each group dined together. Interactions within these groups varied from lively to secluded and private interactions. The areas in which these interactions took place was depicted through where the group was positioned in the cafeteria. The more secluded and private conversations took place in booths, whereas the more lively interactions took place near the center of the cafeteria where all could observe. The nature of interactions seemed to involve previous acquaintances and common interest (for example there was a group of intramural soccer players seated together). All these interactions within the cafeteria exhibited the many opportunities within the residence halls for members of diverse racial/ethnic groups to interact. The residence halls are places where many meaningful interactions take place.

My second observation was very exciting and yielded lost of information concerning student racial diversity. From my interview with Nathan I invited to attend a general meeting for a Hip-Hop organization in which he belongs. He told me that his organization attracted people from all types of racial/ ethnic and economic backgrounds. So I decided to attend the meeting, in hopes of gathering some very substantial information. Before attending the meeting I made sure that I adequately prepared to become emersed within the setting. I made sure that I wore sneakers and a cap (just to make sure that I didn't stick out). I opted to abandon my laptop which I heavily relied upon for my interviews and observations, instead I armed myself with a pen and a little

notebook. As I arrived at the meeting I noticed that there were already a bunch of people gathered well before the meeting had begun. I took great notice of which students were talking to which students. I recorded the racial composition of the group and just floated through the room as students discussed "hot tracks", "b-boy battles" and "compilation albums". One thing for sure my informant was correct. This was the most diverse group of students that I had ever witnessed interacting together. Headphones and CDs floated through the room, conversations were initiated through music. I took note of where people choose to sit as the meeting began, and it was clear that Hip-Hop (at least in this setting) doesn't thrive off racial solidarity but a genuine love for the music. As the meeting began I took notice that the President and Vice-President were an African-American male (President) and an Asian-American female (Vice-President). One of the things that I observed throughout the meeting was a male dynamic of dominance which is often times characteristic of Hip-Hop music. The number of females was very few (I actually counted four). One African-American female seemed to be there just in support of her boyfriend. Another idea that was prompted through this observation is that maybe it isn't just locations that encourage interaction across racial/ethnic groups. Maybe common interest is a better facilitator of interactions across racial lines. Hip-Hop is a music form that has penetrated American society. It has crossed the boundaries of racial, economic, gender, and residential classes. It is a culture of color. After this observation my research has begun to evolve from just looking at locations to areas of common interest that band people together across racial/ethnic differences.

My last observation took place at Cafe Paradiso on Goodwin and Lincoln Ave. Before arriving to the site I decided I would bring my laptop which would be of great use in helping me pretend to be working as well as typing notes concerning the setting. I arrived at Cafe Paradiso around fifteen minutes after three o'clock in the afternoon. The place was packed wall to wall with what appeared to be undergrads, graduate students, and business professionals. Everyone was sipping some type of hot beverage. I sat myself near a window hoping to get an optimum view of the whole establishment. As I began to type on my laptop I noticed that I was not alone in this practice there were other people who were typing away on their laptops as they sipped their drinks. I noticed two racially heterogeneous dining near each other. They appeared to be a group of grad students. The supposed grad students laughed and talked while occasionally peering down at a paper packet. There was a lot of chatting, so much it was hard to hear the linear advancement of conversation past the clatter of other conversations and environmental noises. Lots of jokes were tossed around while still remaining in tune with the "academic talk". I noticed a white guy and an Asian girl holding a side bar conversation at one end of the table. For nearly forty-five minutes I observed the interactions of these two groups. I recorded snippets of conversational pieces, body gestures, and facial expressions.

DISCUSS

Discuss your inquiry, taking care to separate speculation from fact or data

My ethnographic research study examines in which university spaces are students more likely to interact across racial/ethnic lines. Throughout the course of my ethnography, I also attempt to analyze the quality of interaction within these university spaces, as well as the various conditions and characteristics of such spaces that encourage interaction across racial/ethnic lines. The reason I choose to concentrate my research study upon racial/ethnic interactions in various university spaces is because I have noticed that certain places within the campus community attract students from very racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. In these university spaces I have witnessed many instances of interactions across racial/ethnic boundaries. While in other university spaces one may assume that the university has allocated certain spaces to one specific race or

ethnicity. In these spaces there is hardly any interaction across racial/ethnic lines, self-segregation can be routinely witnessed amongst the student body. I am hoping to answer my research questions by conducting formal interviews with selected informants and field observations of selected locations. Hopefully these ethnographic methods will yield important information concerning what I believe is a social phenomenon. The information collected will either disprove or support my hypothesis that certain university spaces are more encouraging of social interaction across racial/ethnic boundaries, while other university spaces are more restricting of these interactions.

Literature Review:

Throughout my research study I have linked my ethnographic interest to various literary works. I have interwoven the findings of The Diversity Project's final report created by the University of California (Berkeley). This final report from the University of California (Berkeley) is very interesting because of the increased level of diversity within this university's student body. "In the brief two decades from 1970 to 1990, the Berkeley campus of the university of California went through the most dramatic transformation of the ethnic, cultural and racial composition of its undergraduate student body of any major university in the nation, perhaps the world." (University of California, 1). The Diversity Project's final report examines how a dramatic shift in the racial/ethnic composition of the student body affects the overall racial climate at this university, and how the university is working to foster a sense of multi-culturalism throughout the campus community.

This literary work is particularly essential to my ethnographic research because it gives a voice to the students in a section of the report entitled Findings From The Voices Of Those Affected. In this section of the report student perspectives are voiced. The perspectives of minority students are discussed in terms of "self-segregation". These students dispute the idea of self-segregation and introduce the idea of racial solidarity. These students are annoyed that their search for common ground is interpreted through a single lens as "exclusionary" of others (Diversity Project, iv). The final report argues that there is a middle ground, or perhaps a compromise between assimilation or attempted diversity and racial/ethnic tension. This middle ground encompasses the concept of student's with strong ethnic and racial identities alongside their simultaneous participation in multi-racial and multi-ethnic interaction.

Another literary source that was used throughout my ethnographic research study is an observational study conducted by Gloria Cowan at California State University (San Bernardino). The study examines interracial interactions at racially diverse university campuses. In this observational study Gloria Cowan observes African-American, Asian American, Latino, and Caucasian students at six southern California State University campuses. Cowan's research findings reflect that when white students are not the majority, social interaction across racial/ethnic lines are more common.

This study was very useful in helping me better understand the dynamics of social interaction. I realized that self-segregation or racial solidarity is not a concept that is distinctly related to minorities. Cowan argues that Caucasians also have an inclination to self-segregate or to engage in intraracial interaction (Cowan, 55). Naturally, people want to socially interact with others whom they perceive are similar to themselves, race and ethnicity are just one of these perceived similarities that facilitate interaction. Minorities in particular desire to interact with each other, especially in social settings where there are predominantly more whites.

Richard Light's book entitled, *Making the Most of College*, was very beneficial in my research study. This book discusses many of the benefits of diversity, especially within a large intellectual community. Light provides a lot of insight into the personal experiences of students in terms of diversity. Light concludes his chapters on diversity by saying that diversity enhances the academic and social experience of students both inside and outside of the classroom. I really thought this book was successful in articulating the benefits of diversity. As many scholars have stated before, students learn the most from each other.

Social interaction between racially and ethnically diverse people is key to establishing an intellectual community that is multi-cultural.

Lastly, I have linked my ethnographic research study to a previous EOTU (Ethnography of the University) student named Nicole Sorell. Nicole's research study explores the issues of racial segregation in the university's residence halls. Although Nicole's research is more directly centered upon the university's residence halls and not all university spaces, I agree that the residence halls are a good site of observation because of the meaningful interactions that occur across racial/ethnic lines within the residence halls. The residence halls are usually the first place in which bonds of friendship are formed. In my research study I observed a residence dining hall because I wanted to see exactly how common is interaction across racial/ethnic lines within the residence halls. Just as I expected, I witnessed various groups of students interacting across racial/ethnic boundaries, although the level and quality of interaction varied from one group to the next.

Has the university's space been racialized?

If any unsuspecting person stumbled upon the quad area of the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), one may discover that certain physical spaces have been "hijacked" by certain racial/ethnic groups. This is no ground-breaking discovery for many students here at the University of Illinois. There are many university spaces that have invisible boundaries; boundaries that members of different racial/ethnic groups rarely cross. The university's public space has been severely racialized. There are places within the university that are branded "black" or "Latino" and "Asian" spaces. Self-segregation can be witnessed in almost any university space. So, where would a person who wishes to meet people of a different racial/ethnic group go to find such a diverse mix? I began to examine various university spaces in which I had seen people from diverse backgrounds interacting with each other. These places are few, but they exist. I started getting tips from friends as well as informant with whom I had conducted formal interviews with, about various university spaces that yielded a diverse crowd.

Beginning my research, I knew about minorities self-segregating themselves, especially in social settings where whites are the majority. At the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), a place where diversity is a mere component of the university's rhetoric, it would be completely natural and understandable for minorities to self-segregate themselves into small support networks. In these small support groups racial and ethnic minorities discover racial solidarity and identity at this predominantly white institution. However, for the benefit of my own personal research I became interested in spaces that encourage cross-cultural and ethnic social interaction.

My first site observation took place in the Weston Hall Cafeteria where I witnessed many groups of people interacting with each other. There were groups that were racially homogenous as well as heterogenous. I concentrated directly upon those that were racially and ethnically heterogenous for my research purposes. There was a group of intramural soccer players dining together. They all seemed to be communicating comfortably. There was a lot of loud banter from this group as they reenacted a "winning" soccer move. A white male and African American female dine together. They appear to be a couple. They are seated across from each other and there is apparent flirting as they are joined by a white female. This white female is introduced to the white male as all three dine together. These are just two examples of racially diverse people socially interacting over dinner. Through this site observation I reaffirmed my belief that the residence halls are in fact a place through which meaningful interaction occurs across racial/ethnic lines. Within the dining hall I witnessed diverse racial interaction amongst the students who were dining as well as with student workers.

My second site observation also yielded important information concerning cross-cultural interactions. I observed people drinking coffee and interacting at Café Paradiso, located

on Lincoln and Nevada. During this site observation, again I noticed many people interacting across racial/ethnic lines. There was a group of what I suppose were graduate students who were laughing and discussing a reading packet that they each obtained. There were moments of laughter where the students joked around as well as moments when they fell silent as they briefly skimmed their literature. This group appeared to be some type of informal study group. There were other racially diverse people dining together at Café Paridiso. Again many of the café's inhabitants appeared to be part of a study group or students sitting alone working on individual projects.

After my second observation my research began to evolve. I started thinking that maybe I should not completely focus my research upon university spaces. Perhaps there is another factor that encourages social interaction across racial/ethnic lines. As I began reviewing my field notes, I realized that common interests also seemed to encourage and facilitate interracial interaction. For instance while observing the interaction in the Weston Hall Cafeteria I initially noticed the group of intramural soccer players. This diverse group of students were brought together by a common interest in soccer. Soccer became a medium through which meaningful interracial interaction occurred. At Café Paridiso, a diverse group of graduate students were interacting within their study group. The shared academic interest linked the students together.

Another aspect of my ethnographic methodology included conducting formal interviews with selected informants. Ideally, I wanted to conduct interviews with a male and female of African-American, Asian-American, Latino, and Caucasian descent. However, due to scheduling conflicts I was only able to interview a male and female of African American descent and Caucasian descent. I also interviewed an Arab female. In these interviews I asked the informants questions pertaining to the racial make-up of their hometown highschool and the university. I asked questions concerning their perceptions of diversity at the university, how frequently they interacted across racial/ethnic lines, the racial make-up of their closest friends, and university spaces in which they had noticed interracial interaction.

These interviews were so informative. In my interview with the black male I realized that he had a very skewed perception of the actual racial make-up of his hometown highschool as well as the university. He seemed to think that the university was more racially diverse than it actually is. He even went so far as to compare the ethnic composition of his hometown highschool with that of the university. This is intriguing because usually minorities have a more realistic view of diversity in comparison to their white counterparts. This informant had a very narrow view in terms of the benefits of diversity. He believed that the ability to interact across racial/ethnic lines was a tool for advancement. He explained that the only times in which he really interacts across racial/ethnic lines was in mandatory situations like in class or at work. This informant also discussed how an individual without the ability to negotiate between various different races and cultures would not be as successful as someone who was in fact more culturally competent. In Nicole Sorell's EOTU research study, she agrees that self-segregation can become a hindrance to a student's future advancement, however, one would argue that there are many more benefits to diversity including cultural sensitivity and intellectual advancement. The second interview that I conducted was with a white female. This informant had a really good sense of the actual ethnic make-up of the university. Her ballpark figures almost matched the exact percentages of the university's ethnic composition. She bragged that she had researched these figures before she decided to attend the university. She explained her experience of attending a private predominantly white highschool, which was much like the university. At the university the informant has a very racially diverse group of friends including females from African-American descent as well as Asian American. She credits this diverse mix of friends with her experience as a first year transfer student living in the university residence halls. She talked extensively about all the diverse girls (she lives in an all girl residence hall) she has met and befriended while living in the residence halls.

My third interview was with a African American female who also attended an all girls private highschool, which was very affluent and majority of the students were white. She discussed how there were only a few black girls in her graduating class. This informant was also very accurate in her ballpark figures of the amount of diversity at the university. She talked about how the lack of diversity at the university was problematic, she even took the opportunity to promote a documentary in which she is creating about the “black student experience at the university”. This black female was very knowledgeable of the benefits of diversity, however, she continued to stress that there wasn’t enough here at the university.

The fourth interview conducted was with an Arab female. This interview was the first interview where the issue of racism was mentioned. This informant explained that her hometown highschool implemented the quota system in order to achieve certain levels of diversity. Her ballpark figures concerning the racial make-up of the student body were somewhat skewed. In our interview she chose to address an issue of what she felt was an act of racism. This informant discussed how she was participating in a fund-raising event for earthquake victims in India, and she concluded that she believed the fund-raising venture was not as successful because she was not Caucasian and the relief effort was for India. She even discussed a negative comment that she received from an angry student saying, “We have our own problems in America, what about the Gulf Coast?”.

My last interview with the white male was perhaps the most engaging and resourceful. In our interview this informant talked extensively about how the university’s rhetoric and its enrollment practices are not aligned. As a blatant contradiction he referred to the Project 500 artwork that is proudly displayed throughout the Student Union, he comments that the murals do not accurately depict the racial situation and climate here at the University of Illinois. This student was very passionate about increasing the amount of racial/ethnic diversity at the university. He talked a lot about the old conservatism that still exists and rules this institution. He started telling me about various university spaces in which I could witness meaningful social interaction. It was through this interview that I began to seriously rethink my original thesis; that it was certain university spaces that helped to encourage interracial interaction. He later invited me to attend the general membership meeting for the Urbana- Champaign Hip-Hop Congress. I was told that the meeting’s membership would be “the epitome of diversity” in this community.

My last site observation was prompted by my last formal interview. I arrived at Noyes Laboratory for the general membership meeting of the U-C Hip-Hop Congress a little before seven o’clock on a Wednesday evening. After arriving I decided to sit near the back where I could take notes without being noticed. I initially scanned the room looking for any evidence of self-segregation there was none, at least none according to race or ethnicity. As the meeting progressed I realized that there was some self-segregation amongst the groups. The members were seated in clusters according to whether or not they considered themselves to be a B-Boy, D-Jay, or Emcee. I also noticed that the female members were congregated together in a small cluster near the back of the room. My informant was correct, this was the most racially diverse mix of students I had ever witnessed interacting together. The president was an eccentric looking African-American male and the Vice-President was actually an Asian-American female. All the members seemed to come from different backgrounds, but with one commonality, a love for Hip-Hop. Hip-Hop is not just a musical art form it is a medium through which people from all backgrounds can fellowship together because of their love for music. Hip-Hop is a culture that has infiltrated every sector of American society, leaving no rock unturned. It has permeated race, class, and residential boundaries. Many times it switches form, Hip-Hop can be entertaining as well as political. It can be degrading as well as empowering. After this site observation my research had taken a slight turn. I was no longer exclusively crediting certain university spaces for encouraging interracial interaction. I now realized that I must insert common interests into the equation. It is both university

spaces as well as common interests that help facilitate and encourage interaction across racial/ethnic lines. Common interests whether they are academic or social in nature, link people of diverse cultures together. Common interests are a uniting force in this campus community. Students within the campus community also have a shared interest in diversity and that is an important starting point for multi-cultural community (Diversity Project, 13). Students appear to be more willing to interact across racial and cultural boundaries when common interests are presented and explored. When common interests are explored the quality of interaction is greater than surface level interaction. This perceived common bond allows people to freely communicate and interact based upon their shared interests. I also noticed from looking at advertisement promotions that certain university spaces are notorious for attracting diverse crowds because they organize Hip-Hop and/or Spoken Word (poetry) events. University spaces like the Courtyard Café are renown for organizing events that attract a diverse audience. These lyrical art forms give a voice to people from all different types of backgrounds. Hip-Hop in particular appeals to all populations of people. Many students actually frequent certain university spaces because they desire to interact with a more diverse mix of people. Collectively, both common interests and certain university spaces encourage interaction between peoples of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. "Advocates of the benefits of racial and ethnic diversity argue that, almost inevitably, good consequences flow when people get to know others from different backgrounds." (Light, 132). These spaces and common interest are instrumental in fostering or creating a close knit multi-cultural campus community. Shared interests help to bridge differences and promote commonality. Certain university spaces function as a "hotel lobby" where diverse people can exchange ideas, debate perspectives, and bond over common interests. At the University of Illinois, space and race have become intertwined, resulting in the racialization of public areas. If we are to create a culturally diverse learning community we too must find that middle ground like the University of California (Berkeley) is attempting to do. "...We have cast the problem incompletely and thus incorrectly by posing the matter as either one of assimilation to a single, dominant culture where differences merge and disappear vs. a situation where isolated and self-segregated groups, retreating into ethnic and racial enclaves, defeat the very purpose of "attempting diversity"...these are not the only two alternatives." (Diversity Project, iii). We must not see things as black and white, assimilation or racial/ethnic tension. We must acknowledge that students can have strong ethnic solidarity bonds, yet still embrace the idea of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic community of scholars. Finding that "middle ground" means combining what we know about physical space and common interest in order to find the common good.

REFLECT

Link

Connect with other resources and materials.

I. In my ethnographic research study I have chosen to use the research findings of a previous EOTU student to support my research claim. In Nicole Sorell's EOTU research study she examines the level of racial segregation within the university residence halls. Although Nicole's research is primarily concerned with the university's residence halls and not all of the university's public space, her research will yield important information pertaining to the occurrence and level of student interaction across racial/ethnic lines. Although the university residence halls are not the centralized focus of my research, I believe they provide a good starting point because lots of meaningful interaction occurs within the confines of the residence halls.

II. The Final Report from the Diversity Project created by the University of California (Berkeley) will be used as a resource throughout my research study to examine how a dramatic shift in the racial/ethnic composition of the student body affects the overall racial climate at this university. This report entails important information and statistics concerning student enrollment based upon race/ethnicity. Included within this report is information on the various ways in which the University of California (Berkeley) is working to foster a community of diversity.

Throughout the article there is a discussion of why students often do not interact across racial lines. This report draws a distinction between racial exclusion or racial solidarity. This report examines how accusations of self-segregation are viewed as an assault upon the idea of a common community. Students of color disagree and consider "racial solidarity" as an aspect of identity-building and not as racial exclusion or isolation. The Final Report argues that ideas concerning racial diversity are not static. The Final Report argues that there is a middle ground between attempted diversity and racial/ethnic tension. This middle ground encompasses the concept of students with strong ethnic and racial identities alongside their simultaneous participation in multi-racial and multi-ethnic interactions. The Final Report emphasizes the inherent positive as well as negative effects of a diversified student body.

III. As my third resource material I will cite the work of Richard J. Light's book entitled, *Making the Most of College*. This book provides a lot of insight into the personal experiences of students. In chapters seven and eight Light discusses the importance as well as the effects of diversity upon the university's campus. Chapter eight's primary purpose is to explore the benefits of diversity in a large intellectual community. Light concludes that diversity enhances the academic experience of students in and out of the classroom.

IV. Lastly, my research study incorporates the findings of an observational study conducted by the California State University in San Bernardino. This study is entitled, "Interracial Interactions at Racially Diverse University Campuses" by Gloria Cowan. The observational study involves the casual interracial and intraracial public-group interactions among African-American, Asian-American, Latino, and White students at six southern California State University campuses. The research findings from this study suggest that when Whites are not the majority of students, interracial interactions are more common.

Implications

Could your findings have broader implications beyond this inquiry?

My research findings have some broader implications. Of course the idea that common interests and certain university spaces can encourage interracial interaction seems obvious, but with this information comes the opportunity to forge a common bond between racially diverse peoples. Universities around the nation should attempt to capitalize upon this idea of uniting people together through shared interest and physical spaces. With this knowledge of how space, race, and common interest are intertwined a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic community can emerge amongst the campus community.